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ABSTRACT

The television networks nightly news coverage of the 1972 Presidential campaign was examined between July 10 and November 6, 1972 to assess the nature and impact of political bias in news coverage. The campaign news coverage of two newspapers and one wire service was also compared with respect to the content and length of each medium's news about the candidates, parties, and political issues to discern differences in the ways that the three media handled their news reports of the campaign. The types of bias investigated were those involved in the news selection process: whether the news was selected because of the peculiar characteristics of the medium (structural bias); because of influence by particular situations, such as political issues (situational bias); or because of the political prejudices of news personnel (political or partisan bias). The analysis showed that structural bias was clearly evident in much of the coverage; newspapers provided greater depth and included greater complexity in their campaign stories, while television news was biased toward visually exciting campaign events easily covered by film crews. No clear evidence, however, was found to suggest that the news coverage by any medium was situationally or politically biased. (RL)

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*News Bias in the 1972 Campaign:
A Cross-Media Comparison*

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R. Gordon Shepherd, "Science News of a Controversial Issue: Marijuana" (3/20/78).

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Jerome S. Silber, "Broadcast Regulation and the First Amendment" (5/19/78).

Harold A. Fisher, "The EBU: Model for Regional Cooperation" (6/2/78).

SPIRO AGNEW only reinvigorated an old conflict with his charges of liberal bias in the news. News media and politicians coexist in an environment perhaps best characterized as unstable and dynamic: both news personnel and politicians are essential to each other in different ways,¹ and yet both operate within a context in which the causes and consequences of the other's behavior are frequently at odds. News personnel need access to newsworthy events that politicians control in large part, and politicians need channels of access to the public that news personnel control in large part. Politicians are able to distribute largesse to their friends as well as sanctions to their enemies; so are news personnel.²

The conflict that results from the different needs and resources of political leaders and news personnel contributes to the maintenance of a democratic way of life, at least when the system functions within reasonable bounds. Few, if any, skeletons can be hidden from the prying eyes of newsmen indefinitely; nor do political leaders have the capacity to present a single orthodox set of "truths" to the public without challenge from some dissident sources for lengthy periods of time. The basic instability of the system probably produces more information about the deeds and misdeeds of public leaders and newsmen than is produced in alternative systems. And, despite the many foibles of the system, it is reasonable to assume that the public receives both more varied and more accurate information as a consequence.³

Accusations and denials of bias in news coverage about public affairs remain one of the more often encountered political charges associated with partisan politics and news reporting in American journalism.⁴ But much of the rhetoric is polemical. Each candidate for office is certain that the major media in his area are not reporting his positions on issues and campaign events in the most favorable light and that his stature is suffering in comparison to that of his opponent. Opponents are equally certain that the

converse is true. Advocates of causes of all varieties strive to obtain coverage of favored positions, and access by one group is immediately challenged by demands for "equal time" and for "fairness" by competing concerns.

The purpose of this study is to present systematic findings concerning bias in television news coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign, and to describe the kinds and meanings of the coverage that the major party campaigns received during the campaign. Several strategies are pursued. First, clarification of the varied meanings of bias are noted. Second, the content and style of presentation of network news broadcasts during the 1972 election campaign are analyzed in order to discern differences in the ways that the networks handled the election campaigns and to isolate differences in the ways various kinds of media handled the campaigns. Third, data from two print media sources are presented in order to discern similarities and differences in coverage between structurally different types of media.

Some Notions of Bias. Weaver argues that simple descriptions of the way political candidates and issues have been covered by a medium are insufficient to establish the presence or absence of partisan bias. If candidate A receives less favorable coverage than candidate B on CBS evening news, for instance, this does not necessarily mean that CBS is biased against candidate A or for candidate B.⁵

Several plausible explanations for the coverage exist: 1) candidate A has less favorable characteristics than candidate B. The news accurately reflects the true situation and there is an imbalance between the candidates with regard to a set of values that are relevant to the political situations that are being reported. Indeed, political bias (in the form of silence) would exist if coverage failed to reflect the imbalance between A and B. 2) Non-political reasons associated with the nature of the media account for differences in coverage. Candidate B engages in activities that are more profitable for the network to report (other things more or less equal) than candidate A. Coverage of these activities is likely to attract a larger audience, improve network ratings, and still meet canons of newsworthiness. 3) A particular situation exists so that the candidate B's campaign staff plans a strategy to obtain greater news coverage than candidate A's news strategy involves. The campaign

staff achieves the goal by seeing to it that the candidate makes himself more readily and easily available to news media, and that many of the incentives which influence the nature of news coverage are exploited. 4) CBS may indeed be biased against candidate A and biased for candidate B, and this bias is simply reflected in news coverage of the two candidates.

News coverage explained in terms of any of these models may have grave consequences for political fortunes of the candidates, although only the last model fits what is normally termed political bias in polemics on the subject.⁵ Bias is based on selecting some information rather than other information to be included in news reporting about political events. And, although all reporting involves selection of information, the criteria employed in making the selection and the consequences of the selection define the nature and extent of bias or subjectivity in news coverage.⁶

Objective, or unbiased, coverage involves selection no less than biased coverage. But unbiased coverage includes material that is reported in an equitable fashion.⁷ The same material would be included in a news story in the same context regardless of the candidate or issues involved. A sense of equity dictates that coverage of similar events be similar, and that selectivity be based on implicit theories about events and about newsworthiness that are generalized beyond simple partisan sides in an election or controversy about an issue.

Selectivity of material that arises because of the characteristics peculiar to a medium results in structural bias.⁸ Television network news is a business; it is a business that bases its revenues on audience ratings. News must be produced that attracts and holds audiences, and this means that news must entertain as well as inform. News stories must include pictorially interesting material, material that excites viewer interest, and material that can be presented in a relatively abbreviated and simplified thematic form, since time, rather than depth, is at a premium. So, too, is drama and conflict.⁹ And the economics of TV news staffing and transmission of material require use of location rather than action shots in many instances, a fair amount of coverage of political events that are "convenient," if not staged exclusively, for television news. It is no accident that scheduling of campaign appearances frequently is done with needs of TV news in mind.¹⁰

Selectivity that is influenced by particular situations results in "situational bias." In such cases, coverage is influenced by a set of circumstances that may or may not be related to structural biases of a medium. But what is included in news coverage of an issue or candidate would be different under different general circumstances. It is possible that a candidate runs a particularly aggressive campaign and receives more coverage than similar candidates who do not run similar campaigns. Sensitivity to some issues rather than to other issues, for instance, may be due to a particular historical sequence. It is likely that American involvement in C.I.A. "covert operations" will receive more media coverage for a time following Vietnam than they did prior to Vietnam, or that corrupt campaign practices will receive more scrutiny for a time following Watergate than they did before Watergate. Media attention is focused on events simply because the events themselves and prior coverage of them have sensitized the media and the public to these concerns.¹¹

Campaign strategies are directly related to news coverage.¹² Thus, particular campaigns may define a unique set of circumstances that have direct implications for news coverage. McGovern, an underdog in election polls and a maverick in his own party, sought news coverage during the 1972 campaign;¹³ Nixon, an incumbent who does not appear to have possessed a television personality, and who related to newsmen only with difficulty,¹⁴ shied away from personal coverage that was not under the absolute control of his staff.

Selectivity that is based on political prejudices of news personnel, individually or collectively, results in political or partisan bias. Some material is chosen rather than other material in order to bolster a point of view or the political fortunes of a candidate. Although the selectivity may be based on untruths or distortions, it is far more likely that factual material is simply selected and presented in a way that supports or undermines a political position. Politically biased coverage is inequitable coverage of political candidates or issues.

Method

The basic problem in assessing bias in news coverage is to discern a baseline of factual material against which news content may be

evaluated, and then to distinguish instances of partisan, structural and situational bias from relatively objective coverage.¹⁵ The analyst must rely on mass media content in making all of these judgments if a study is designed to assess news coverage about a broad spectrum of events, since independent verification is seldom feasible. It may be possible to examine some particular event in great detail and then to evaluate news coverage about it in terms of independent observations.¹⁶ But case studies are hardly useful for describing general political coverage. What is useful is to examine the designs of several of the more prominent studies of news bias in order to appreciate the baseline problem more fully.

The most common baseline that has appeared in studies of news bias has been to compare the amount of favorable and unfavorable news content and to conclude that bias is present whenever the two are not roughly equal in amount.¹⁷ But assessing the extent to which news is biased based only on the ratio of favorable to unfavorable content is of questionable usefulness, since there simply is no reason to assume that aspects of campaigns, candidates and issues are usually (or even occasionally) distributed in equal proportions. Some events, some practices and some candidates are simply worse than others.

An even more vexing problem involves trying to disentangle political, structural and situational kinds of bias in news coverage.¹⁸ Requisites for solving this problem include building variation from several sources into a design: situational bias can be discerned only if coverage of similar events in differing situations is studied; and structural bias can be discerned only if coverage of similar events in differing kinds of media are included. A very rigorous test of political bias, then, would arise from differences in coverage about political issues and candidates within a single kind of medium once the structural and situational biases had been removed. This "residual" notion of political bias may be overly restrictive, since both structural and situational biases can have political consequences and since political bias may be nurtured by other forms of bias, but the polemics concerning bias have focused on political bias to the exclusion of other forms regardless of the consequences.

A strategy of Analysis. In this study, an attempt is made to overcome a number of the shortcomings in the design of some prior studies of bias. News about the election was analyzed from weekday

evening news programs, AP day and night wire coverage, a daily newspaper that had endorsed McGovern (the *Washington Post*), and a daily that had endorsed Nixon (the *Chicago Tribune*). About equal amounts of news coverage reported before and after the first day of September, the date normally regarded as the beginning of the campaign, were included in order to provide a lengthy time frame for analysis.¹⁹

Weekday evening network stories (N=4349, 1420 on CBS, 1576 on NBC, 1353 on ABC) about political affairs that were broadcast between July 10, 1972, and November 6, 1972, were included in the analysis. The news story was the unit of analysis, and a variety of characteristics of each news story was coded from videotaped materials acquired from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, and from the printed texts of news stories. For purposes of the present analysis, stories that emphasized the major party candidates (McGovern or Nixon), the major party campaigns and the key issues (e.g., Vietnam) are included.

AP newswire stories (N=4466) carried between August 12 and November 6, 1972, were also included. Material between July 10 and August 11 could not be retrieved. Coders first read through wire material for the day wire, recorded the stories reported, and physically assembled material that was relevant to a given story. The procedure was then repeated for the night wire. Assembly of materials for each story was necessary because portions of material relevant to a given story are sent out over the wire in segments as they are received. Thus, for a story that is developing, a number of details will appear in separate "takes," and material must be combined in order to include all relevant details in coverage. The newswire which serves newspapers was chosen over the AP service provided to radio and TV because it is the more comprehensive.

Stories about the candidates and the campaign from the *Washington Post* (N=1183) and the *Chicago Tribune* (N=905) between July 10 and November 6, 1972, in Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday issues were located and coded according to rules and conventions developed for coding of the other material.²⁰

Both frequency and amount of coverage were measured. Frequencies were based on the number of news stories about various aspects of the election in each medium. This figure was the number of distinct news stories on CBS, NBC and ABC, and in the

Washington *Post* and the Chicago *Tribune*, and the number of distinct topics or events concerning some aspect of the election that was included in either day or night AP wire reports. Amount of coverage was measured in seconds (or minutes) of TV news time, column inches of news story coverage in newspapers, and wire copy inches (triple-spaced teletype copy) in AP wire reports. A high level of agreement between frequency and amount of coverage was discerned in analysis.

Newspaper coverage was measured on a microfilm reader so that the column inches reported were somewhat less than the column inches that had initially appeared in the *Tribune* or the *Post*. News stories that were included in the analysis were, however, measured in a standardized way so that relative amounts of coverage are comparable. Comparisons of percentages based on frequencies and on amounts of coverage resulted in identical conclusions. Thus, only percentages based on frequencies of stories or reports are presented after the initial descriptive information below.

Findings

General Emphasis. Network television news, the two newspapers and the AP wire emphasized different kinds of coverage during the 1972 election, but differences were probably a result of structural characteristics of the media. Stories about candidates, parties and partisan campaigns, and issues presented in conjunction with either candidates or parties and campaigns or both were included.²¹ Issues that may have been pertinent to the fortunes of the candidates or parties-campaigns but that failed to mention either candidates or parties explicitly were omitted from the analysis.

Each medium devoted the most attention to news that emphasized issues in conjunction with candidates, and parties and campaigns. But newspapers gave by far the largest proportion of such coverage to all three topics, while TV news gave by far the least coverage to simultaneous emphasis of all three. These data are presented in Table 1.

Seventy-one percent of the partisan stories in the *Tribune* (and 77 percent of the column inches) and 72 percent of the partisan stories in the *Post* (82 percent of the column inches) emphasized issues together with both candidates and parties-campaigns. In contrast, only about one-third of the partisan coverage of each network (34

Table 1

Frequency and Amount of News Coverage of Candidates,
Parties and Partisan Issues, by Medium

Emphasis ^a :	CBS		Network News NBC		ABC		Chicago Tribune		Newspaper Washington Post		AP Wire	
	N	Time ^b	N	Time ^b	N	Time ^b	N	Length ^c	N	Length ^c	NQC	Length ^d
Candidate	5%	3%	7%	3%	4%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	6%	2%
Party	6	4	9	8	6	5	2	1	2	0	3	2
Candidate & Issues	18	12	15	14	16	13	11	10	12	8	26	24
Candidate & Party	24	26	23	22	28	30	10	8	9	7	10	7
Party & Issue	13	15	14	13	14	13	5	3	3	2	8	7
All three	34	40	32	40	31	36	71	77	72	82	47	58
Total	(560)	14.8	(526)	13.2	(566)	14.0	(903)	12,421	(1178)	20,671	(1760)	29,488

^aEmphasis was defined in terms of amount and priority of attention paid to candidates, parties or campaign activities, and issues in the context of a story. Stories that failed to emphasize either a party or a candidate were omitted from the analysis. Percentages are rounded.

^bTime was measured in seconds, but network totals in hours.

^cLength is measured as column inches measured from microfilm copy.

^dLength is measured as inches of AP Wire text from a dispatch devoted to an event or topic within the day-wire or night-wire coverage.

percent of the stories and 40 percent of the time on CBS, 32 percent of the stories and 40 percent of the time on NBC, and 31 percent of the stories and 36 percent of the time on ABC) emphasized issues in conjunction with both candidates and parties-campaigns. About half (47 percent of the topics and 58 percent of the report inches) of partisan AP wire coverage was about issues in conjunction with the other two topical areas.

As Table 1 suggests, TV news, in contrast, was more likely to stress stories about both candidates and parties-campaigns, and about both issues and parties-campaigns than either newspaper or AP wire reports. Finally, newspapers were less likely to cover stories that emphasized only candidates or only parties. The same conclusions were reached whether frequency or amount of coverage was compared.

Thus, evidence for the existence of structural bias in 1972 election campaign coverage was clear: little variation in the kinds of concerns emphasized within media compared to much greater variation between media. Newspapers apparently gave greater depth and included greater complexity in stories about politics; TV news was biased toward campaign coverage, with all the excitement, hoopla, color, drama and ease in locating film crews and reporters that are part of American presidential politics. TV news was able to devote fewer stories and less time to particular topics than the print media.

Candidate and Party-Campaign Coverage

Stories that emphasized Nixon or McGovern and the Democratic or Republican Parties were prominent in coverage during the 1972 campaign. Amount and frequency of attention by major media is nearly as great a concern of partisans as the quality and content of the coverages. Many citizens perceive favorable attributes of preferred candidates and unfavorable attributes of their opponents in media messages regardless of what news stories say about the candidates, since selective perception, retention and recall tend to be influential in interpreting media messages. Name recognition and familiarity are also important in formation of candidate preferences, although recognition and familiarity are substantially more important in preference formation during primary elections

Table 2

Frequency and Amount of Nixon and McGovern, and Democratic and Republican Party Coverage by Medium^a

	CBS		Network News NBC		ABC		Chicago Tribune		Newspaper Washington Post		AP Wire	
	N	Time	N	Time	N	Time	N	Length	N	Length	N	Length
Candidates:												
Nixon	47%	45%	49%	45%	43%	39%	58.7%	55.6%	61.4%	62.8%	57.2%	54.2%
McGovern	53	55	51	55	57	61	42.3	45.4	39.6	38.2	43.8	46.8
Total	(374)	9.54	(317)	8.17	(346)	8.59	(804)	11,385	(1084)	19,948	(1275)	21,750
Party												
Republican	45.9%	45.9%	46.8%	44.5%	37.4%	35.6%	49.2	47.4	55.6	58.2	47.8	47.2
Democratic	55.1	55.1	54.2	56.5	63.6	65.4	51.8	53.6	45.4	42.8	53.2	53.8
Total	(430)	12.47	(406)	10.83	(446)	11.73	(788)	11,090	(1003)	18,968	(1179)	21,611

^aSee notes for Table 1. See text for definitions.

than during general elections in which partisan cues are also likely to be engaged.

McGovern and the Democrats received greater attention than Nixon and the Republicans in network television news coverage during the 1972 campaign.²² In contrast, Nixon received greater attention than McGovern in both newspapers and AP wire reports. The Democrats had greater coverage in AP wire reports and in the *Chicago Tribune* than the Republicans, while the GOP had greater coverage in the *Washington Post*. Differences in the frequency of coverage paralleled differences in the amount of coverage; but contrasts among media were small regardless of which metric was employed.

Networks and newspapers also covered the parties-campaigns and the candidates in different ways, as shown in Table 2. ABC, for instance, devoted more attention to McGovern in comparison to CBS and NBC. And ABC devoted an even larger proportion of stories about the Democratic Party and campaign. The *Post* gave greater coverage to Nixon than the *Tribune*, while the proportion of AP wire reports about the candidates closely paralleled that of the *Tribune*. The *Post* also paid more attention to the Republican Party and campaign than either the *Tribune* or the AP wire.

The *Post's* greater attention to the GOP and to candidate Nixon may have stemmed from its location in Washington and its status as the "home town" newspaper in the District of Columbia. It is also possible that greater TV news emphasis of McGovern and the Democratic Party-campaign arose from their status as challengers mounting a highly active campaign against opponents who did not use the incumbent head of the ticket as a cutting edge in their media campaign.

As may be recalled from the 1972 campaign, Nixon employed high ranking Republican officials, other associates and even a Democrat (John Connally) to attack the opposition. These "surrogates" did much of the campaigning. Of course, these observations do not account for differences between ABC's candidate and party-campaign coverage and that of CBS and NBC. Some hint of partisan bias was present in the news coverage of the 1972 campaign; but evidence of structural and situational biases in this coverage was much stronger. A modicum of caution suggests,

however, that qualitative aspects of this coverage be scrutinized more closely.

Favorable, Neutral and Unfavorable Candidate Coverage. News stories about the major party candidates were judged to be favorable to a candidate when they associated attributes of success with his candidacy. Attributes of success included winning, gaining, being successful, skilled, a hard worker, diligent or responsible, being greeted by a favorable crowd reaction or approval. News stories were judged to be unfavorable to a candidate when they associated attributes of failure with his candidacy. Attributes of failure included losing, losing support, failing, being negligent, lazy, foolish, irresponsible, and being greeted by an unfavorable crowd reaction or disapproval. News stories that could not be classified as predominantly favorable or unfavorable were classified as neutral.

Nixon received more favorable coverage in each medium. McGovern, moreover, received more unfavorable coverage in each medium except AP wire reports. Nixon received slightly more frequent (but a much greater amount of) unfavorable coverage than McGovern in wire coverage. But the frequency and amount of unfavorable news coverage differed more between kinds of media than within kinds of media, despite variation among network and newspaper treatment of Nixon and McGovern.

The extent to which network, newspaper and AP wire coverage about Nixon and McGovern was neutral is surprising. Indeed, neutrality characterized news coverage of Nixon and McGovern more than any other aspect. In no case could more than one-third of the coverage portrayed in Table 3 be classified as either favorable or unfavorable. Television news stories were most likely to be neutral and newspaper stories were least likely to be neutral. AP wire reports more closely resembled TV news than those of newspapers. It is important to reiterate that a story had to be clearly favorable or unfavorable to one candidate or the other in order to avoid being classified as neutral. Thus, the greater ambiguity of television news and the greater ambiguities stemming from attempts to meet FCC requisites of "fairness" in news coverage may have contributed to greater neutrality in video news.²⁵

As Table 3 reveals, Nixon received more favorable and less unfavorable coverage on CBS and ABC. McGovern gained more

Table 3

Favorable, Neutral and Unfavorable Television, Newspaper and Wire Stories about Nixon and McGovern that Emphasize the Respective Candidates, by Candidate, Medium, Frequency and Amount of Coverage.^a

	Nixon				McGovern			
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total
Network News:								
CBS:								
Frequency	16%	74	10	(130)	9%	76	15	(122)
Time	14%	74	11	(192.8)	10%	76	14	(196.8)
NBC:								
Frequency	15%	78	7	(105)	20%	69	12	(96)
Time	15%	77	7	(171.6)	22%	67	11	(160.8)
ABC:								
Frequency	19%	72	8	(94)	10%	73	17	(122)
Time	21%	66	14	(134.6)	14%	67	18	(190.3)
Newspaper:								
Tribune:								
Frequency	30%	47	23	(631)	27%	44	28	(512)
Length	32%	44	24	(8810)	28%	44	28	(7788)
Post:								
Frequency	27%	50	23	(866)	25%	50	25	(649)
Length	26%	52	22	(16,101)	24%	53	23	(12,330)
AP Wire:								
Frequency	19%	64	17	(599)	16%	67	17	(457)
Length	20%	63	17	(10,681)	15%	72	12	(8961)

^aSee notes for Table 2. See text for definitions.

favorable coverage on NBC news, but he also gained more unfavorable coverage on NBC. From a slightly different perspective, Nixon was most likely to receive favorable coverage on ABC. A larger proportion of time on ABC, however, was also devoted to unfavorable Nixon news, while unfavorable Nixon coverage appeared in a slightly greater proportion of stories on CBS than on the other networks. NBC news about McGovern was considerably more favorable and less unfavorable than McGovern news on other networks, while ABC news was most unfavorable to McGovern.

The *Chicago Tribune* was both more favorable and more unfavorable to Nixon than was the *Washington Post*. The same was true of McGovern coverage. Although differences were fairly slight, the *Post* included more stories classified as neutral than did the *Tribune*. Both papers, however, contained a greater proportion of material favorable to Nixon and a greater proportion unfavorable to McGovern. Thus, it would appear that Nixon was the net beneficiary of both *Tribune* and *Post* news coverage; the same was also true of network news.

AP wire coverage was slightly more favorable to Nixon than to McGovern. But wire reports also tended very slightly to be more unfavorable to Nixon. Many wire stories about the candidates were neutral (over six in ten), and favorable and unfavorable coverage was very nearly balanced in a statistical sense.

Favorable, Neutral and Unfavorable Party-Campaign Coverage. News stories about the two major parties and campaign activities were evaluated in a manner similar to the way that candidate stories were evaluated. Stories that emphasized attributes of success or behavior implying success or favorable treatment were classified as favorable to a party or campaign, while stories that emphasized failure or behavior implying failure or unfavorable treatment were classified as unfavorable. Stories in which neither favorable nor unfavorable treatment predominated were classified as neutral.

The Republican party and campaign received a greater amount of favorable coverage. The Democrats received more unfavorable coverage, although important exceptions were evident. A much larger proportion of newspaper coverage than coverage in other media was favorable to each party-campaign, while a smaller proportion of AP wire coverage was favorable. Network news and AP wire coverage was more likely than newspaper coverage to be

Table 4

Favorable, Neutral and Unfavorable Television, Newspaper and AP Wire News Stories about the Democratic and Republican Parties and Campaigns in Stories that Emphasize the Respective Parties, by Party, Medium, Frequency and Amount of Coverage.*

	Republicans				Democrats			
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	(N)	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	(N)
Network News:								
CBS:								
Frequency	19%	73	8	(119)	15%	70	15	(204)
Time	17%	75	8	(215.4)	17%	66	17	(367.6)
NBC:								
Frequency	27%	65	8	(108)	15%	74	11	(185)
Time	35%	54	11	(168.6)	16%	73	10	(324.9)
ABC:								
Frequency	21%	74	4	(98)	13%	70	17	(236)
Time	21%	74	5	(140.5)	15%	67	18	(408.8)
Newspapers:								
Tribune:								
Frequency	37%	47	16	(464)	36%	43	21	(340)
Time	40%	44	16	(6215)	38%	42	20	(5170)
Post:								
Frequency	32%	50	18	(665)	35%	47	18	(418)
Time	31%	52	17	(12,282)	35%	48	16	(7624)
AP Wire:								
Frequency	9%	69	22	(410)	8%	86	6	(448)
Time	10%	69	21	(8,335)	7%	87	5	(8957)

*See notes for Table 3.

neutral. Each kind of medium reported about the same proportion of unfavorable news about the major parties and campaigns; but considerable variation among the TV networks and among the two newspapers was evident.

The GOP received more favorable and unfavorable coverage on NBC than on CBS or ABC, while it received the least unfavorable coverage on ABC, according to Table 4. At the same time, the Democratic party-campaign received the most favorable and least unfavorable coverage on NBC, while it received the least favorable and most unfavorable coverage on ABC. The GOP gained a larger proportion of favorable coverage on each network; but this disparity was least on CBS and greatest on NBC. The Democrats also gained more unfavorable coverage on the networks, and this disparity was largest on ABC and smallest on NBC.

As Table 4 shows, the *Tribune* was more favorable and less unfavorable in coverage of the GOP than the *Post*, although the *Tribune* was also slightly more favorable in coverage of the Democratic Party-campaign than the *Post*. The *Post*, in contrast, was slightly less likely to have been unfavorable to the Democratic party and campaign.

The AP wire was more likely than either newspaper to have been neutral in coverage of both parties and campaigns. Wire reports were also less likely to have included favorable emphasis in coverage of parties-campaigns. From a slightly different vantage point, the wire reports were both more favorable and more unfavorable to the GOP than to the Democrats in news reporting. Disparities in unfavorable reporting about the Republican party-campaign were about three times as prevalent as unfavorable coverage of their opponents.

Sources of News

The most important source of information in news stories was coded for each story. Sources were grouped into general categories: Republicans, Democrats, institutional (including executive, judicial, legislative branches of government, as well as other institutions), interest groups, foreign, experts and other sources. When no other source was mentioned in a story, the reporter was coded as the source.

As might be expected Republicans were most frequently sources for Nixon stories and Democrats for McGovern stories. But percentage fluctuations among media were not great in the use of sources, although the print media were a bit more likely to use GOP sources than was TV news. Where reporters themselves were treated as sources (e.g. no other source was given), CBS reporters were more favorable to McGovern and less favorable to Nixon, ABC reporters more favorable to Nixon and less to McGovern, while NBC was most often unfavorable to McGovern. Owing to small differences on the whole, these results are not tabled here but may be obtained from the author.

Positional Emphasis

News items presented early during a television newscast or on the front page of a newspaper presumably have been judged to be more important and may have a greater chance of being seen or read than is news "buried" toward the end of a television broadcast or on the inside of a newspaper. Party-campaign and candidate stories were therefore coded according to whether they appeared among the first five stories on each television newscast or on the first page of a newspaper. Stories that met the criteria had "positional emphasis." (AP wire coverage was not included in this analysis, since positional emphasis is meaningless in the context of wire reporting).

As to candidate coverage, positional emphasis of Nixon and McGovern was very similar in each medium, although McGovern probably benefitted from greater emphasis in network news, and Nixon probably benefitted in newspaper news. (See Table 5.) The largest discrepancy in TV news coverage was on ABC. Candidate coverage on CBS and NBC was skewed in the same direction but the discrepancies were much smaller.

The *Tribune* and *Post* treated news about the candidates quite differently. Little candidate coverage appeared on the first page of the *Tribune*; the *Post* included much more. Nixon did receive more positional emphasis in both, but that difference was dwarfed by apparent policy differences concerning use of the front page.

In party-campaign coverage, patterns of positional emphasis closely mirrored that of candidate coverage. The Democrats received greater positional emphasis in television coverage, while

Table 5

**Positional Emphasis of News Stories
by Candidate, Party and Medium.^a**

Television:	Candidate ^b			Party ^c	
	% High	Total		% High	Total
CBS:					
Nixon	44%	176	Republicans	40%	193
McGovern	49	198	Democrats	52	227
NBC:					
Nixon	42	154	Republicans	38	186
McGovern	44	163	Democrats	41	220
ABC:					
Nixon	37	148	Republicans	38	167
McGovern	49	198	Democrats	50	279
Newspapers:					
Tribune:					
Nixon	4	464	Republicans	3	388
McGovern	1	340	Democrats	1	400
Post:					
Nixon	23	666	Republicans	25	548
McGovern	17	418	Democrats	16	455

^aPercentages are based on frequencies and represent placement among the first five stories on TV news, and on the front page in newspapers.

^bPercentages based on the total number of stories emphasizing each candidate.

^cPercentages based on the total number of stories emphasizing each party.

the Republicans did better in newspaper coverage. CBS emphasized more GOP than Democratic stories.

The *Tribune* policy limiting such news on the front page apparently included parties as well as candidates.

Partisan Issue Coverage

Political issues are the fulcrum about which electoral battles are waged. Whether or not electorates pay attention to them or base candidate preferences on them, politicians often behave as if issue differences were crucial to their campaigns.

Issues reported in conjunction with either candidates or parties-campaigns or both were included in this analysis. Stories were coded as favorable when the problem that underlay the issue was being solved, a desired outcome was in sight or the issue reflected

Table 6

Favorable, Neutral and Unfavorable Issue Coverage by Medium.^a

Television News:	Favorable	News Coverage		Totals
		Neutral	Unfavorable	
CBS	3%	86	11	921
NBC	4%	85	11	995
ABC	4%	84	12	899
Newspapers:				
Tribune	29%	52	19	792
Post	25%	55	22	1045
AP Wire:	23%	55	22	4129

^aSee notes to preceding Tables. Percentages are based on frequencies. See text for definitions.

favorably on some basic institution or practice, and as unfavorable when the problem was not being solved, a desired outcome was not likely, or the issue reflected unfavorably on some basic institution or practice. Most Watergate coverage would provide examples of the latter coverage in relation to the GOP campaign, while conclusion of peace in Vietnam would provide an example of the former in relation to the GOP (after the election).

The adage that bad news drives out good was clearly supported in network news about partisan issues, but the same was not true of newspaper or wire coverage. Favorable, neutral and unfavorable issue coverage on the three networks were nearly identical. About one newspaper story in four about campaign or candidate-linked issues was favorable and about one in five was unfavorable. AP coverage was nearly evenly balanced. Thus, differences in the way that media types reported issues during the election were apparent.

A set of 12 general issue domains was defined. The set circumscribed most of the news that could be related to the campaign. The issues were categorized so that they corresponded to popular perceptions and important national problems. Not unexpectedly, stories specifically about campaign activities were the most frequently covered issues on TV news and in the newspapers (see Table 7.) This may have been in part an artifact of the coding frame, since it was designed to include issues associated with either a candidate or a campaign. If anything, the less frequent coverage

Table 7

Issues Associated with the Campaign by Medium and Type of Medium.^a

Policy Issues	Television			Newspapers		
	CBS	NBC	ABC	Tribune	Post	
Social Welfare	3%	2%	4%	4%	4%	6%
Natural Resources	3	2	2	2	2	3
Labor-Management	1	1	1	4	3	2
Civil Rights	2	2	2	2	3	5
Public Order	10	9	7	6	5	10
Economy	13	12	9	6	8	14
Vietnam	17	20	19	13	11	19
Foreign Affairs	12	16	14	6	7	15
Defense	4	3	3	2	2	3
Government	5	4	5	23	22	7
Republicans	14	13	14	13	13	8
Democrats	16	15	21	20	18	8
Totals	(1362)	(1516)	(1304)	(866)	(1140)	(4297)

^aSee notes for preceding Tables. Percentages are based on frequencies. See text for definitions.

of campaign affairs in the AP wire reports (Republicans, Democrats in Table 7) was more surprising.

Table 7 also shows that Vietnam and other foreign affairs dominated TV news, with economic issues and concerns associated with public order running close behind. The newspapers devoted a much larger proportion of this coverage than did TV to governmental functioning. Vietnam, economic issues and public order matters followed, but less frequently in the press than on television. AP coverage of issue stories resembled the distribution of TV news coverage.

The print media gave roughly the same degree of attention to social welfare, natural resources (and agriculture), civil rights and national defense as did TV. They paid greater attention to labor-management problems and much less attention to (non-Vietnam) foreign affairs than either network or AP but these latter differences were small. Print and electronic media differed most in coverage of government, foreign affairs and the economy, all fairly complex issues. All in all, the attention the media gave to issues was highly similar.

In a further analysis of issue coverage not reported statistically here, percentages of favorable, neutral and unfavorable coverage of issues were calculated within each of the 12 issue categories for this analysis. In general newspapers carried a good deal more favorable news about the issue areas than did network news, as did AP, but both also carried more unfavorable news than did TV. The central difference between TV news and news in print appears to have been in the greater neutrality of television news.

A striking similarity was apparent in the way CBS, NBC and ABC covered issue areas, although there were a few minor discrepancies, especially in low-frequency categories.

The newspapers showed larger differences in issue coverage. The *Post* was generally less favorable and more unfavorable about issues than the *Tribune*, particularly in coverage of social welfare and civil rights, but this was also true, though of smaller magnitude, in coverage of public order, foreign affairs and of the two major party campaigns. The *Post* carried more favorable news about defense policy and Vietnam, but also devoted a larger share of neutral coverage to the economy and labor-management issues. AP was roughly similar to the newspapers in that regard.

It is difficult to conclude from this brief analysis that any set of issues, representing any particular political viewpoint, was supported or opposed in a consistent manner by a particular medium. The neutrality of TV news on nearly all issues suggests either ambiguity in relating to issues, at least in comparison to print media, or greater devotion to objectivity. Certainly the small differences in treatment of particular issues by CBS, NBC or ABC—or by the *Tribune* or *Post*—in comparison to the extent of inter-media differences offer little succor to those who saw partisan bias in issue coverage.

Issue Linkages to Major Party Candidates

The media are reputed to have substantial impact on the formation of initial images, perceptions and frames of reference about matters of policy. The inertia of existing cognitions may be avoided, at least to some extent according to this view, as issues become associated with candidates. Partisan issue coverage was coded in terms of its implications for each of the candidates on the

Table 8
Favorable, Neutral and Unfavorable Candidate Coverage in
Issue News, by Candidate, Issue and Medium for Selected Issues.*

	Nixon				Vietnam				McGovern			
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total
Television:												
CBS	2%	83	15	(48)	0%	82	18	(11)				
NBC	2%	90	7	(41)	0%	100	0	(5)				
ABC	5%	84	10	(38)	0%	57	43	(7)				
Newspapers:												
Tribune	27%	39	33	(99)	18%	43	39	(56)				
Post	20%	44	35	(113)	34%	45	22	(65)				
AP Wire:	12%	64	1	(276)	16%	62	21	(159)				
Economy												
Television:												
CBS	6%	89	6	(18)	7%	75	25	(4)				
NBC	9%	70	22	(23)	0%	75	25	(4)				
ABC	6%	69	25	(16)	0%	75	25	(4)				
Newspapers:												
Tribune	27%	58	15	(82)	30%	32	58	(40)				
AP Wire:	14%	69	17	(183)	13%	54	33	(76)				
Government Functioning												
Television:												
CBS	3%	54	42	(33)	7%	79	14	(14)				
NBC	11%	56	33	(27)	12%	75	12	(8)				
ABC	3%	63	33	(30)	0%	100	0	(8)				
Newspapers:												
Tribune	24%	44	32	(136)	16%	49	35	(141)				
Post	16%	53	32	(180)	15%	60	25	(151)				
AP Wire:	5%	67	27	(113)	7%	83	11	(75)				
Public Order												
Television:												
CBS	11%	78	11	(18)	15%	86	0	(7)				
NBC	0%	100	0	(10)	50%	50	0	(2)				
ABC	6%	88	6	(6)	75%	25	0	(4)				
Newspapers:												
Tribune	18%	54	27	(35)	22%	44	33	(18)				
Post	20%	51	29	(45)	5%	67	29	(21)				
AP Wire:	12%	48	39	(56)	10%	71	19	(21)				
Social Welfare												
Television:												
CBS	0%	92	8	(13)	12%	62	25	(8)				
NBC	0%	80	2	(5)	5%	0	100	(1)				
ABC	0%	86	14	(14)	0%	0	100	(1)				
Newspapers:												
Tribune	25%	53	22	(56)	35%	47	18	(17)				
Post	18%	45	38	(40)	38%	43	19	(21)				
AP Wire:	8%	73	20	(106)	15%	56	29	(52)				
National Defense												
Television:												
CBS	0%	100	0	(9)	0%	100	0	(3)				
NBC	0%	100	0	(10)	0%	50	50	(2)				
ABC	14%	85	0	(7)	0%	100	0	(1)				
Newspapers:												
Tribune	20%	53	27	(15)	43%	14	43	(7)				
Post	38%	46	15	(26)	0%	42	58	(12)				
AP Wire:	9%	85	6	(33)	10%	50	40	(10)				

*See notes for preceding Tables. Stories were coded in terms of im- : -tions for Nixon or for McGovern.

assumption that "bias free" issue coverage may not relate to candidates in a "bias free" way.

Issue coverage was classified as "favorable" whenever it enhanced the image of a candidate by making him appear more effective, correct, successful or in accord with consensually held social values. Coverage was classified as "unfavorable" whenever it diminished the image of a candidate by making him appear less effective, correct, successful or as deviant with respect to social values. Issue

coverage that was neither clearly favorable nor unfavorable or ambiguous was classified as neutral. The implications of six issues for the candidates—Vietnam, the economy, government functioning, public order, social welfare and national defense—which were discussed in the campaigns and received a fair amount of attention were selected for this analysis.

Differences between television and print media in the style of coverage were replicated in the analysis of specific issue implications for candidates (see Table 8). With regard to Nixon and McGovern, television news coverage of the issues was predominately neutral. Modal newspaper coverage was also neutral, but much more favorable and unfavorable connections between issues and candidates appeared than in the TV coverage. AP wire reports fell between TV news and newspapers in frequency of neutral coverage. It is useful to describe the impact of issue coverage on the candidates as reflected by the manifest content of this news, since the data documented the absence of a systematic tilt in favor of either Nixon or McGovern on television.

Vietnam. U.S. involvement in Vietnam was winding down rapidly during the autumn of 1972, and peace appeared "at hand" just before the election. The significance of the issue was doubtless reflected by its frequency of coverage and the extent to which Vietnam was linked to the campaigns in the mass media. It does not appear that the networks were anti-Nixon or anti-McGovern during the campaign, although substantial differences between the *Tribune* and *Post* were seen.

In contrast to what might have been expected, Nixon was associated with Vietnam in a more favorable way than McGovern on each network. With the exception of several stories on NBC, Nixon also received less unfavorable coverage than his Democratic opponent, and the same was true of AP. The difference was substantial on ABC. Nixon received, finally, a great deal more coverage in Vietnam news than McGovern, reflecting Nixon's status as head of state. On the other hand, both newspapers were more unfavorable than favorable in linking Vietnam to Nixon, but the same was also true of the *Tribune's* treatment of McGovern in Vietnam coverage. Nixon received relatively more favorable coverage in the *Tribune* and McGovern in the *Post*. Perhaps the strongest case for partisan bias appears in newspaper coverage,

considering the *Post's* more "pro-McGovern" and the *Tribune's* more "pro-Nixon" Vietnam coverage.

The Economy. Economic issues generally benefitted Nixon a bit more than his opponent. CBS was most favorable to Nixon in coverage of economic issues and ABC least favorable among the networks, but this is based on only four stories tying McGovern to the economy; one was unfavorable and none was favorable.

Both newspapers gave Nixon more favorable than unfavorable coverage in economic news and McGovern more unfavorable than favorable coverage, but the tendency was stronger in the *Tribune* than in the *Post*.

Government Functioning. Nixon was associated with news about government operations and activities in more stories than McGovern in television news and this coverage was more unfavorable to him. A large proportion of TV news, including some Watergate news, was unfavorable to Nixon (a third of all such news on ABC and NBC, and two fifths on CBS). About as much favorable as unfavorable coverage of McGovern appeared on each network, although CBS gave McGovern the least favorable coverage.

Newspapers were more neutral (the one exception in this analysis), although the *Tribune* was relatively more favorable to Nixon and the *Post* to McGovern in news about the government. AP, in contrast, was relatively favorably to McGovern.

Public Order. News about public order—including news about law and order—was more favorable to McGovern on each network, although few stories were broadcast about the issue. Newspaper coverage was generally unfavorable to both candidates, although both fared slightly better in the *Tribune*. AP wire reports were also unfavorable to each candidate; again, the balance of coverage was more unfavorable to Nixon.

Social Welfare. TV coverage of the welfare cluster of issues—including health, education, social security, medicine and others—was unfavorable or neutral in relation to each candidate, except for one story which was tied to McGovern in a favorable way. CBS was most neutral in news coverage. Newspapers were more favorable and McGovern was clearly the beneficiary of this coverage. The *Tribune* was also substantially more favorable to Nixon than was the *Post*. AP wire coverage of social welfare was predominately

neutral or unfavorable as to the candidates—about twice as much content unfavorable as favorable.

National Defense. Even fewer news stories and wire reports appeared about national defense than the issues already discussed. Indeed, TV news did not vary substantially in the way the issue was tied to each candidate; content was predominately neutral. The *Post* was more favorable to Nixon and much more unfavorable to McGovern on the defense issue than was the *Tribune*. AP wire reports were most like the *Post* in this regard.

Thus, very little news that met criteria established for partisan bias was carried by network news about specific issues. Coverage among the networks was very similar, favoring one candidate or the other on a given issue, yet substantially neutral in relation to the candidates. If either benefitted from TV reporting of the six issues it was Nixon but he clearly appears to have benefitted because of his incumbency: that he dealt with many issues as President, and the media reported this as news.

Newspaper coverage tying issues to candidates was also essentially neutral, although the *Tribune* did appear to carry issue news that was more favorably linked to Nixon than did the *Post*, which appeared to favor McGovern, but this trend was not consistent on all issues

Discussion

This study analyzed the manifest content of television news programming and other types of news media in an attempt to assess the nature and impact of political bias in news coverage. Two types of media and a wire service were included in the study in order to assess the amount of partisan bias present in network news coverage of the 1972 election campaign and to try to disentangle partisan bias from structural and situational forms of bias.

Structural bias was clearly evident in much of the analysis. Television covered the 1972 campaign somewhat differently than did the press, and newspapers differed somewhat from AP wire reports. It is also possible that situational factors were related to the ways the campaign was covered, although a longitudinal design would be required to find that out. The Democrats nominated a candidate who was widely viewed as disagreeing with much of the

regular Democratic constituency on many issues; his campaign suffered from a series of mishaps, many of which found their way into the news, and an impression of indecisiveness and confusion was evident in news during the campaign. In contrast, the GOP ran an incumbent with a credible record who chose to relegate many of his campaign activities to others and to avoid public appearances in unstructured situations.²⁵

Using a residual view of partisan bias (bias that occurs when the same kind of media cover the same type of event in different ways) little basis for asserting partisan bias could be found in television network coverage of the campaign. Each candidate benefitted to some extent from different aspects of news coverage in each medium. McGovern and the Democratic party-campaign received more coverage than Nixon and the GOP, but this was true on all networks. ABC was slightly more likely than the other networks to provide more coverage about McGovern and the Democrats. Nixon received more coverage in the press, although the *Tribune* gave the Democrats more coverage than the Republicans, and the *Post* gave the Republicans more coverage than the Democrats, reversing the popular expectation. But if Nixon received less coverage than his opponent, his was more favorable. None of the networks was clearly and consistently less favorable to Nixon or McGovern on balance than were the others.

McGovern had some advantage in terms of positional emphasis—placement early in a news broadcast or on the front page of a newspaper—and the advantage was greatest on ABC. Nixon had an advantage in positional emphasis in the printed media. The advantages and disadvantages of party-campaign coverage paralleled those of the respective candidates.

No clear evidence for political bias in issue coverage was apparent in the analysis. The networks were very similar in coverage of issues in each aspect of coverage. Some differences in *which* issues received attention did appear between media.

If either candidate gained from issue coverage during the 1972 election, it was Nixon, who was more likely to have been linked favorable to many of the issues than his opponent, although the pattern of favorable and unfavorable linkages varied considerably by network and newspaper on different issues. But the advantage could not be attributed to partisan bias in coverage. It did appear,

however, that the *Post* was somewhat tilted toward McGovern and the *Tribune* toward Nixon in linking issues to candidates. Again, differences were not large and not consistent.

Structural biases were more evident. The amount and nature of coverage varied considerably by medium. TV news was markedly more likely to be neutral, while newspaper coverage was more likely to be favorable or unfavorable about each candidate and party-campaign. The printed media were more likely than television to include favorable and unfavorable coverage of the parties. In terms of emphasis, Democrats appeared earlier in news more often than the Republicans on TV news, while the Republicans appeared more frequently on newspaper front pages.

Issues were covered differently on television and in newspapers, and, as in candidate and party-campaign coverage, were less likely to devote neutral coverage to issues.

The kinds of bias that did appear in the content of the 1972 campaign may well have had political consequences, and, if so, these probably favored Nixon more than McGovern. But political bias by the news media is probably less significant in rectifying whatever imbalances may be found in political campaign coverage than the structural biases owing to differences in the media themselves, their news formats and limitations. Television news does not operate the same way as newspapers. It is now little more than "electronic headlines," albeit more psychologically engaging than headlines in newspapers. But this does not have to be true. Television news can be produced in ways that surmount many of the structural biases that characterized the medium during the 1972 campaign.²⁶ (It must be acknowledged that this study was confined to network newscasts, hence did not include network news "specials" concerning the campaign, nor did it examine local news programs.)

Research about the evaluations citizens make of news and the content of news is clearly warranted, but must be non-polemical, must take into account the characteristics of audiences, and should also relate manifest content to the needs and gratifications that news, no less than other forms of programming, serve.²⁷

NOTES

1. Susan Heilmann Miller, "Reporters and Congressmen: Living in Symbiosis," *Journalism Monographs* No. 53, January 1978.
2. Thomas Whiteside, "Annals of Television: Shaking the Tree," *New Yorker*, March 17, 1975.
3. Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1972* (New York: Atheneum, 1973); see also Timothy Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus* (New York: Random House, 1972); Bernard Rubin, *Political Television* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1967); Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President 1968* (New York: Pocket Books, 1970); Paul H. Weaver, "Is Television News Biased," *The Public Interest* 26:57-74 (1972). Edward Jay Epstein, *News From Nowhere: Television and the News* (New York: Random House, 1973); and Epstein, *Between Fact and Fiction: The Problem of Journalism* (New York: Vintage, 1975).
4. Joseph Keeley, *The Left-Leaning Antenna* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1971); see also, Edith Efron, *The News Twisters* (Los Angeles: Nash, 1971); James Keogh, *President Nixon and the Press* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1972), and Robert Cirino, *Don't Blame the People* (Los Angeles: Diversity Press, 1971):
5. Weaver, *op. cit.*
6. Bernard Roschco, *Newsmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 60-101. Also see C. Richard Hofstetter and Terry F. Buss, "Bias in Television News Coverage of Political Events: A Methodological Analysis," *Journal of Broadcasting* (forthcoming).
7. Jorgen Westerstahl, *Objective News Reporting* (Goteborg: Mimeo, 1972).
8. Epstein, *News From Nowhere*, *op. cit.*
9. John Birt, "There is a Bias in Television Journalism," *TV Guide*, Aug. 9, 1975, pp. 3-7. Also see Edwin Diamond, *The Tin Kazoo: Television, Politics and the News* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975).
10. Crouse, *op. cit.*
11. Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36:176-87 (1972).
12. Robert Agranoff, *The Management of Election Campaigns* (Boston: Holbrook Press, 1976), pp. 361-75.
13. Crouse, *op. cit.*, p. 340
14. McGinniss, *op. cit.*; White, *op. cit.*; see also, Theodore H. White, *Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Atheneum, 1975); and Crouse, *loc. cit.*
15. Westerstahl, *op. cit.*
16. Roschco, *loc. cit.*; see also Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, *Politics and Television* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968).
17. See, for instance, Efron, *op. cit.*, Ernest W. Lefever, *TV and National Defense: An Analysis of CBS News, 1972-1973* (Boston, Va.: American Strategy Press, 1974); Robert L. Stevenson, *et al.*, "Untwisting The News Twisters: A Replication of Efron's Study," *Journalism Quarterly*, 50:211-19 (Spring 1973);

Robert G. Meadow, "Cross Media Comparison of Coverage of the 1972 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism Quarterly*, 50: 482-88 (Autumn 1973); Frank D. Russo, "A Study of Bias in TV Coverage of the Vietnam War: 1969 and 1979," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 35:538-43 (1971-1972), and American Institute for Political Communication, "Liberal Bias" as a Factor in Network Television News Reporting (Washington: American Institute for Political Communication, 1972).

18. Westerstahl, *op. cit.*

19. Extensive analysis of television news showed little variation in the pre-campaign and campaign phases of news coverage, although slight shifts in substantive issue concerns were apparent. See C. Richard Hofstetter, *Bias in the News: A Study of Network Coverage of the 1972 Election Campaign* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976). It is likely that imagery and information about the major party nominees was widely disseminated prior to September 1, 1972.

20. Coders were thoroughly indoctrinated concerning the purposes of the project and the rationale for the specific content indicators that they were responsible for coding. Careful attention was given to supervision, especially in the television analysis phase of the project. The coding supervisor played each videotaped news story one at a time, instructed coders on the specific story emphasis to be coded and responded to questions that coders might have concerning their own coding assignments. All materials for every fifth broadcast was checked for reliability in this analysis (intercoder agreement on most indicators ranged from 70 to 100%), and attention was given to rectifying problems that were discerned during the analysis by the supervisor. Coders working on the AP and newspaper materials were instructed in a similar way. Reliabilities were recorded less frequently for this material, but tended to be even greater than those reported for TV news stories. Coding is detailed in Mary Jane Judge and C. Richard Hofstetter, *Content Analysis of Taped Television News Stories: Coding Manual*, Working Paper No. 2 in the Television Election News Coverage Project (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, Polimetrics Laboratory Report No. 15, 1974); and C. Richard Hofstetter and Mary Jane Judge, *Reliability of Television Election News Coverage Content Coding*, Working Paper No. 4 in the Television Election News Coverage Project (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, Polimetrics Laboratory Report No. 17, 1974).

21. Stories and wire reports about major parties and campaign efforts were coded as a single category, since they tend to be indistinguishable in most instances.

22. News about Nixon in his role as candidate was distinguished from coverage of administrative activities. When all coverage about the administration was combined with Nixon coverage, Nixon received substantially more coverage than McGovern. See Meadow, *loc. cit.*

23. Epstein, *News From Nowhere*, *op. cit.*

24. But it should be noted that two periods covered by this report excluded the post-convention "Eagleton scandal." See Donald S. Kreger, "Press Opinion in the Eagleton Affair," *Journalism Monographs* No. 35, August 1974.

25. A much more comprehensive analysis of what network news carried about candidates, parties and issues is reported in Hofstetter, *Bias in the News*, *op. cit.*

which found that networks paralleled each other in coverage to a degree in hundreds of comparisons.

26. W. Phillips Davison, *et al.*, *Mass Media: Systems and Effects* (New York: Praeger, 1976), pp. 202-14.

27. Sidney Kraus and Dennis Davis, *The Effects of Mass Communication on Political Behavior* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), pp. 287-90.